DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 176 908 RC 011 456

AUTHOR Thompson, Doug; Rooney, Jim
TITLE City Experiences. Guidelines for Urban Adventures.
PUB DATE Nov 77
NOTE 19p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Affective Objectives; Alternative Schools; Architectural Education; Educational Games; *Experiential Learning; Field Trips; Grade 9; *High School Students; Human Resources; *Interdisciplinary Approach; Learning Activities; *Outdoor Education; Perception; Secondary Education; Self Directed Groups; Skill Development; *Suburban Youth; Teacher Responsibility; Teacher Workshops; Traditional Schools; Urban Areas; *Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS *Adventure Education; Colorado (Denver); New York (New York); Outward Bound

ABSTRACT

The booklet provides guidelines, concrete curriculum plans, and rough ideas on urban adventure programs for suburban high school students. Following an overview that explains a three-phase organizing theory (exploration, focusing, action) for urban programs, there are descriptions of: a student-organized and conducted architectural tour of New York City; a program based on an urban scavenger hunt for ninth graders in traditional schools in the Denver area; an intensive 5-day experience in Denver for an alternative high school; 19 specific urban awareness activities that involve observing, questioning, and synthesizing; ideas for written projects based on urban conditions in New York; how and where to find and interview resource people in a city; and a 3-day urban experience for teachers run by the Colorado Outward Bound School. A list of 15 "process skills" necessary for successful urban adventures is included, as well as a discussion of teacher liability during city experiences. (SB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED176908

CITY EXPERIENCES

GUIDELINES FOR URBAN ADVENTURES

RC 011456

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Doug Thompson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

With the publication of the Urban Newsletter over the last year has come an increased interest in programs involving urban adventures. We've received requests for more information on how to do city experiences. The Newsletter was designed as a forum for sharing ideas among those interested in this type of program. But we've felt that a concise, "how-to-do-it" type booklet was needed to provide the kind of information requested from educators who were getting involved in urban adventures for the first time.

City Experiences has been designed to provide concrete curriculum plans as well as rough ideas to stimulate the creation of your own program. We've tried to cover the essential components of an urban adventure but obviously we've left our many good ideas. Nor do we perceive our ideas to be unique or new -- perhaps our integration of ideas is new, but certainly much of the content has been modified from other sources. Our goal is to provide guidelines for your program and not to present ourselves as the experts in a rapidly growing field. Regular readers of the Urban Newsletter will recognize a few items which have appeared in the Newsletter, yet most of the material is new.

Your comments on this booklet are greatly appreciated. The Urban Newsletter will continue as long as our energy allows it to continue. It will still be primarily a service to interested educators, and a forum for ideas. Your contribution allows others in the field to provide more exciting and meaningful programs for students.

Thanks to all who have contributed formally or informally to the Newsletter and City Experiences.

Doug Thompson and Jim Rooney
The Urban Newsletter
2317 Downing Street
Denver, CO. 80205

November 1977

CONTENTS

An Overview	page 1
Architectual Tour	4
A Program for Traditional Schools	5
A Five-Day Program	6
Awareness Activities	8
Resource People and Interviewing	11
Written Projects	12
Liability	13
Teacher Workshop	14

AN OVERVIEW

It's a bleak December night in a city park near the Denver capitol building. A small group of suburban Mountain Open High School students cluster around their portable propane stoves cooking a spaghetti dinner. Suddenly, while they are swapping stories about the places they saw during the day, a derelict stumbles upon this winter picnic. The students invite him to join the group and for the next few hours, with a pine tree covered with Christmas lights glowing in the background, the students learn first-hand about the inner city of Denver. It's an unexpected experience that stands in sharp contrast to the predictable routine of a classroom.

In New York City another group of suburban students walk down the streets of the decaying South Bronx for the first time. These students, from the Village School, an alternative high school in affluent Great Neck, live less than 20 miles from the South Bronx, but they know of the area in the same way they know about Calcutta. They view it as a dangerous, ravaged slum that has no relation to their lives. Led down the streets by two girls their own age, both of whom live in the neighborhood, the place suddenly becomes very real to them. A dozen sociology books or a hundred lectures on grinding poverty in the midst of superfluous plenty will have an impact. But for high school students, the lesson routine is a pale substitution for a few hours of walking through the area and speaking with people who live there.

For the past three years we have been experimenting with different urban programs for suburban students. Some have been dramatically successful, others dismal disappointments. The range of curriculum tie-ins includes sociology, architecture, consumer math, history, art, photography, urban ecology, journalism and social action. The duration of the courses has been varied, different curriculum models have been tried, and through trial and error, strategies to deal with logistical problems have evolved.

Since every city is different and the interaction with its suburbs is unique, all urban education programs will necessarily have to be tailor-made.

The organizing theory that has been useful in helping to develop a framework for these urban education courses has three phases:
1.) Exploration, which seeks to acclimate students to the city;
2.) Focusing, which isolates an issue or concentrates on a particular aspect of the city; and 3.) Action, which ties issues together and encourages a self-initiated project for the students.

EXPLORATION

In Denver this aspect of the course involves an orientation to the city's bus system. Groups of two are formed and each pair is given a map and taught how to read it. By learning how to make transfers and becoming familiar with bus routes, self-confidence is built. This phase concludes with an activity adapted from wilderness training. Each team of two to four students is dropped off in the city early in the morning and presented with a different sealed envelope. Inside is a list of five places which each team must try to reach. Teams are asked to meet at a prearranged place at five p.m., to try to bring back proof of their visit to each location.

FOCUSING

Once the students get their bearings, the course zeros in on a particular aspect of the city. For instance, in New York the group may begin exploring different ethnic neighborhoods. On most big city newspapers there is a reporter who specializes in staying on top of developments in various ethnic enclaves of the city. Often this person is a dedicated preservationist who battles the homogenizing forces seeking to blot out the diversity of small neighborhoods. Many of these reporters are eager to help teachers who are interested in promoting a deeper understanding and appreciation of various ethnic neighborhoods.

For example, each year Peter Freiberg of the New York Post invites the Village School Neighborhood Class up to his apartment. He recounts the struggle of various neighborhoods that are fighting City Hall, greedy developers and redlining by banks, as well as internal destructive forces.

ACTION

This is perhaps the most important, but also the trickiest part to pull off. Ideally the course should build to a point where students are itching to peel off from the group and attack some independent project.

For instance, last year in Denver, a 15-year old student became interested in the legilative process. Through the city course he came in contact with Common Cause. He volunteered to help the organization compile information on the voting records of local Congresspeople. Over a period of six weeks he spent many hours down in the Capitol building learning the nuts and bolts of the political process. At the end of his stint he emerged a self-directed and somewhat seasoned political operative. For the rest of his life he will be able to draw on the skills he sharpened during this internship.

In New York a senior became interested in grass-roots organizing among working-class women. She found that her feminist consciousness, honed in the suburbs, differed markedly from notions about the women's liberation movement in less fashionable districts of the city. This disorienting discovery propelled her into an investigation of what she viewed as a surprising phenomenon. When she found that there was little of value written about this facet of the women's movement, she began attending local community meetings in Brooklyn and interviewing residents. At the same time, this also opened up a whole new line of communication with her own mother, who had grown up on New York's lower East Side.

The year before, in a less ambitious Action Phase, the Village School's three-week Neighborhood Course culminated in a series of student reports. On a clear spring day the group staked out a secluded knoll in the Bronx Botanical Gardens. It was planned that each student would share the results of an individual investigation. So wedded was the teacher to traditional academic expectations that he was stunned by the imaginative diversity of the students' projects. Two students documented in photos an astounding array of city art, ranging from elaborate murals to graffiti-decorated subway cars. A sophomore held everyone spellbound as he fleshed out in gruesome details the statistics of one particular police precinct in an inner city community. His curiosity, sparked by one day visit, has ripened into a consuming interest. Two years later, he still scours newspapers for information on the area, and frequently writes angry articles for the school paper about the deplorable conditions in the neighborhood. Another student dramatically dumped a sack of debris at his feet. He called the pile

of trash "artifacts" and used everything from a broken wine bottle, to torn ticket stubs, to dried dog droppings to evoke "the essential ambiance" of various neighborhoods he visited.

Even though there are occasional hassles and logistical problems when doing city experiences, the satisfactions are strong. For those who believe in the viability of the city there is the mildly noble realization of the suburbs. More immediate, though, are the day-to-day boosts.

Few classroom moments are as intensely exhilarating as standing in the middle of the Brooklyn Bridge on a clear winter day with the East River churning below your feet, the sun gleaming off skyscrapers, a stiff wind quickening your pulse and a dozen awestruck students seeing this stunning panorama of the city for the first time.

Or the benefits can turn on the more subdued elation that comes from seeing an awkward faint-hearted student successfully complete a complicated "solo trip" through the east side of Denver. A fragile comaraderie among the students evolves, and even a student who does not ordinarily evoke much affection from his peers will be effusively congratulated and encouraged.

Or it will be discovered that traditional disciplinary problems tend to fade. Students respond eagerly to the teacher's request for help and a student who is normally perceived as a distraction to the group can become one of the strongest participants. The high level of energy and involvement and also the close student-teacher contact nurtures a mutual respect.

Or the satisfaction might come from overhearing a mountain born teenager, who had previously expressed a haughty disdain for cities and their problems, tell a friend, "I used to think of Denver as the pits, but now I'm not so sure. I think I'll come down more often to check it out."

In New York a blank hard-bound notebook is passed around on all the trips to the city. Students are encouraged to make drawings or write about what they see and feel. After a trip to lower Manhattan during which the teacher proudly pointed out his favorite flamboyantly ornate building lobby, a senior wrote in the book, "During the summer I was a messenger boy in the city. I passed through this building hundreds of times. Today is the first time I ever really saw it."

ARCHITECTURAL TOUR

As part of a City Smarts course at the Village School in Great Neck, Long Island, students prepare and execute tours of historic sections of New York City for the rest of the class. The emphasis is on the architectural features of the buildings in that section of the city. The tour described here was led by Steve Graff and included a visit to the center of municipal government enclave of Manhattan.

The trip in was uneventful except for an unexpected traffic snarl on the BQE and clogged downtown traffic on the Bowery. As the yellow school bus lurched along inch by inch, and thick black car exhaust wafted in the windows, some impatient drivers nearby began blasting their horns in frustration. Rodger sagely pointed out that, "Blowing your horn in a situation like this is like yelling at a knot in your shoelaces." Just beyond the abandoned Men's House of Detention an elderly gentleman crossed in front of the bus. He was wearing an iridescent maroon shirt and bright red pants. Someone said, "Check out that old guy's pants, will you?" With characteristic tolerance David Keith replied philosophically, "Well someone has to wear them."

The tour kicked off in front of the elaborately ornate Hall of Records. Rhea, who has an unblinkingly sharp eye for architectural detail, was the first to identify the building's style. She pointed out that the profusion of sculptures, garlands, and festoons, as well as its monumnetality and formal symmetry marked it as a dead give-away for the French inspired Beaux Arts style.

After an official group portrait at the pedestal of the Horace Mann ("Go downtown, young man!") statue, we descended into what Steve explained was the "first municipal subway station, which was officially opened in 1900."

Rodger reminded people that, "Although there is a $50 fine for spitting in the subways, it doesn't cost enything to throw-up." After hearing the history of the long-gone newspaper row, Steve pointed out the dull red 19th century Potter Building, "which is the first building to use structual steel and the first to have fire-proof terra cotta ornamentation.

Next Jim spotted a knot of reporters on the steps of City Hall, and we went over to watch an impromptu news conference given by the spectacular Carol Bellamy, who will probably be the next City Council President and a diminutive high-domes fragil-looking Robert Wagner, Jr., who is running for Manhattan Borough President. Snapping away at a furious pace, David Keith and Peter Hirsch fit right in with the professional photo journalists covering the event. We slipped into City Hall and standing beneath the winding white limestone stair heard the checkered history of this French Renaissance building which has been squatting at this crossroads for over 170 years.

Later, standing at the foot of City Hall Park on the site of a long gone Post Office, Jim launched into a detailed history of the Woolworth Building. He spoke about the revolutionary building techniques of this 1913 skyscraper, which was one time the tallest building in the world. Whipping himself into an aesthetic frenzy, he rhapsodized about the elaborate neo-Gothic design, the elegant flying butresses, the humorous gargoyles and the imaginative engineering. Finally entering the arched lobby crusted with stunning golden mosaics, most students

were truly impressed. Beaming as students wandered around awestruck, Jim confidently remarked, "Yeah, it happens every year. This building just blows people away."

We stopped at the Tweed Courthouse, Long sentimental favorite of past City Smarts classes. This slightly seedy columned monument to city graft and corruption was built by New York's notorious Boss Tweed.

Then moving under the elaborate arches of the impressive Municipal Building, home of city bureaucrats, we entered Police Plaza. Jim intimated that this was probably not the first time some City Smarts scholars had seen this particular bastion of law enforcement. After a hot dog lunch we saw some newly-weds emerge from the Municipal Building where civil marriage ceremonies take place.

Then a whirlwind loop around the next blocks, we flashed by various courts, the recently condemned Tombs, and absorbed some social history concerning the old Five Points area. This intersection, now demapped behind the Criminal Courts Building, used to be "the most deadly neighborhood in America. A murder a day was committed near an old brewery which used to be terrorized by vicious gangs with colorful names like 'The Plug Uglies'."

Returning to the bus in the shadows of the majestic Brooklyn Bridge, we quickly organized a lottery on the estimated time of arrival back at the venerable Village School.

A PROGRAM FOR TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS

The Urban Exploration is a one-day field experience for 9th graders -- one part of a social studies course entitled "Contemporary American Issues." It is designed to give students an opportunity to find out for themselves what it's really like in downtown Denver and to talk with the people there about current urban issues. The experience also enables students to: (1) gain practice and confidence in getting information from and interviewing people, (2) use and develop map skills and their ability to use the public transportation system, and (3) plan, make decisions, and work intensively with a small group.

As a result of the Urban Exploration experiences, students will be able to identify current urban issues. These objectives can be accomplished by using the scavenger-hunt format described below.

Each small group of students and their Senior Leader is expected to complete a specified number of items downtown within 4 or 5 hours. The attached, sample items are separated as follows: List 1, things that involve observing or finding out about day to day life and recreational opportunities in the city; List 2, items centering on the city's businesses and livelihoods; List 3, a variety of things that will take more time and effort to complete and that require personal contact/interviews. Each small group of students will only complete

from 3 to 7 items (depending on time allowed) and will NOT experience all aspects of Denver. However, the items you choose to present to your students, should, when added together, present a kaleidoscopic view of the many different activities and types of people in the city.

Some samples from the lists:
Explore 9th Street between Champa and Curtis and bring back two things: one that represents what life was like in those houses when they were new, and one that represents what's going on in them now.
Find out how much it costs to rent an office in one of the high-rise buildings.
Find out how many trains arrive in Denver each day and what they bring.
Find some children playing, note the location, and bring back something that represents what the children were doing.
You haven't eaten for three days and you have no money. Find a place to eat legally. Describe the food that was served.
Interview a government official concerning his/her views about pollution control.

To make all this happen in a traditional high school setting required lots of work and communication to all those affected: Administrative approval, parent permissions, notifying all teachers of the field trip date and the names of students involved. Senior leaders had to be recruited and trained also.

We felt that one mature, non-peer individual should accompany each small group of 9th graders. She/he had the responsibility of insuring that the group conducted itself in a reasonable manner and that appropriate measures were taken if an unexpected or emergency situation arose. The Seniors were recruited from Sociology and Government classes, and training sessions were held to explain procedures and responsibilities to all those who volunteered.

What makes this kind of experience worth all the hassles? The outcomes:

Kids found out that downtown is "not a hostile, threatening place to go."
Kids learned to approach people and lost their fear of doing it.
Kids got "turned-on" and excited about learning.

A FIVE-DAY PROGRAM

The first few days of school were exciting ones as we prepared for the second "disorientation" to Mountain Open High School. As an alternative school, we feel that students should be exposed to an entirely new style of learning -- predominantly experiential -- as soon as possible. We call it our disorientation.

About two years ago, one of the staff designed a three-phase disorientation: a week in the city, a week in the wilderness, and a week in school studying styles of learning and philosophy of education. This year, I was responsible for designing and coordinating the city trip. I conceived of the trip as an exploration and adventure rather than a

in-depth study of urban problems. The students first need exposure and a sense of the diversity to be found within a city so that they can begin to deal with their often faulty perceptions.

The trip lasts for four days and is an intensive experience. The first day of the trip is actually spent at school planning. The students polarize themselves; a minority have experienced the city and enjoy it; the majority have not, and are not looking forward to spending four days in that "dirty, crowded place with perverts at every corner." I chuckle and remain neutral throughout, allowing them to express their fears, expectations and prejudices. I know that their attitudes will change by the end of the trip.

We meet downtown by noon and leave our personal gear at one of the "homes" where we'll be staying. Without too much effort, I've arranged to use a church, where we will have floor space for sleeping and a kitchen for cooking. This is not going to be a series of field trips during the day; we are going to live in the city for a week.

After we buy our food for the week, I send the students off on a bus orientation. In groups of three or four, they have to travel by bus to six locations scattered throughout the city. I try to get them moving in the city immediately so that they don't have time to express their reservations. And I try to get them thinking for themselves -- I give them the locations, but not which buses to use.

Sometime in the next three days I ask the students to explore a neighborhood in Denver. There are at least a dozen well-defined ethnic, commercial, and high or low income neighborhoods to choose from. In small groups they try to find housing; a sense of crime rates; r-sidents' concerns; quality of schooling -- in the end I want them to have a solid feeling for the"livability" of that neighborhood.

Or I might have each student plan an afternoon based on a personal interest -- from a first visit to the art museum to a search to check out the possibilities for the production and marketing of s student's art work.

The more I let the students explore, the more they seem to find. One of the most effective tools for this is an informal interview with a stranger. I'd rather think of it as a conversation, yet the effect is virtually the same. The students don't have written questions, but rely on their intuition and ability to listen. The plan is simply to find a stranger and strike up a conversation. One group found the first Black to move into Park Hill, which was previously white. He moved there in 1930 and vividly described blockbusting, white fears and his personal struggle against racism. Three other students decided to do a study of restaurant kitchens and speak with the chefs. They approached the manager of a well-known Oriental restaurant, explained their idea, and the manager enthusiastically gave them a tour. The highlight was a conversation with the chef -- since he didn't speak English, the manager served as translator.

Evenings are consumed by dinner preparations (except for one evening when we visit a soup kitchen -- a frightening, high impact experience for almost all the students), a game of frisbee in the park, a visit to a coffee house, or perhaps staying "home" and evaluating the day's experiences. It is usually a recreational evening, yet we find alternatives to TV or the movies. In fact, I forbid TV for the trip, so that we will be forced to be creative with our time.

The outcomes of a week like this mesh nicely with the goals of our program. At the heart of our program is the development of self-directed learning and responsibility for one's actions. Both are unavoidable in a city trip where the students spend much of the time on their own. They also learn specific skills, like avoiding getting lost, talking with strangers and getting information, traveling through the city, finding and using resources, creating their own recreation and relaxation exper-

iences and working together as a group to solve a problem.

Students undoubtedly change their perceptions of the city after the four days. Fears and prejudices are destroyed while a healthier attitude is developed. Students who expected to find filth and unfriendliness have found excitement and people willing to give their time to an inquisitive young person. The same students who were not looking forward to the week in the city return to school honestly enthusiastic and talking about a great week they had.

Perhaps these students will return to the city many times during the year to do research on a specific problem, explore a new neighborhood, or simply to enjoy themselves.

AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

Much has been written about the concept of awareness as an appropriate objective in school curriculum, especially in the field of Environmental Education. Many wilderness based activities, and to a lesser extent, urban activities, have incorporated this concept. Awareness might be defined as a process involving three skills: observing -- consciously perceiving what's going on around you; questioning -- focusing your attention on elements that hold promise of solving a problem you've formulated; and synthesizing -- organizing your observations and experiences, and those of others, into a tentative resolution or clearer refinement of that problem.

I have felt for a long time that most of the awareness activities developed for wilderness environments (Environmental Education has primarily focused on these types of activities) could be easily transferred to urban areas with great success. For starters, the work of Steve Van Matre, Acclimatization, lends itself quite easily to urban areas. Van Matre begins with concepts like similarities, differences, diversity, change, adaptation, and contrasts, and develops activities through which students can find specific examples of these concepts. Diversity, for example, might be learned through explorations of neighborhoods, studies of buildings, and comparisons of styles of clothing worn by different groups in the city.

Some other specific awareness activities:

Where is the HUMOR in your city? Look for graffiti, advertisements, political promises, or theatre markees that illustrate various forms of humor. What about humor affiliated with institutions?

CHOREOGRAPH the rhythm and movement of people and things in the city. Try to dramatize or mime:
- jaywalkers
- crossing a sidewalk
- a funeral procession
- men at a repair garage
- hitch hikers
- women at a sale
- older people out for a walk
- the activity of a building

Start from a central location in a city, and have each person walk in a different direction for several blocks. Ask each person to find one word to describe the area through which they have walked and share those words in the group.

Find something WRONG or BROKEN in your city and then try to get the city or whoever is responsible to fix it.

At the end of a day in a city, have a vivid description of a person you met -- the setting, their face, your feelings at the time, what was said. Do the same with the most unique or interesting building or construction project.

CHANGE is everywhere, discover something in your city that is:
- changing at a predictable rate
- changing at an unpredictable rate
- increasing in quantity
- increasing in number
- changing in form and function
- changing due to natural conditions
- changing due to artificial conditions

Using a "typical" house in a neighborhood, describe it as fully as possible. Speculate about its history and occupants.

Find a "magic place" in the city for yourself, someplace to which you are attracted. Don't tell anyone else the location of your secret place, but spend some time there by yourself at least once. Write about the experience.

Where can you find INFORMATION about community activities? e.g.
- guilding codes
- city budget
- parks
- free clinics
- free food
- standard of living

Try to figure out what you SCREEN OUT while walking through or hanging out in your city. Where do you put your attention and why do you do it?

Do some PEOPLE WATCHING in your city. Note the use of:
- facial expression
- gestures
- posture
- gait
- routines
- intensity
- clothing color
- mannerism
- use of props
- symbols
- use of social distance

In your city find:
- something that looks like you
- something soft
- a relic of the past
- something scary
- a secret
- a hiding place
- something free
- patriotism
- magic
- a tribe
- solitude
- a moral
- a place that attracts or repels you
- a place to sit
- something racist
- something that can't be photographed

Without using your eyes, either smell or hear all that is around you while standing on a city corner. Describe what you smell or hear as opposed to identifying.

Do hard-nosed surveys on garbage collection, apartment conditions, food pricing comparisons, crime rates.

What rules do you encounter in the streets, buildings, parks, institutions of your city? Who makes these rules and who benefits from these rules?

CITY TOUR: put each of the following on cards, pull them out at random and follow the direction:
- follow the loudest sound for twenty minutes.
- walk in a straight line across town
- walk only in the shadows
- follow a policeman for as long as possible
- go directly to the city jail
- stop: observe the things around you for twenty minutes
- walk in a circular pattern for 30 minutes

Who is the most important, happiest, wealthiest, wisest, best-loved person in the city?

Explore ownership patterns. Who owns what in a given area, percent of occupied, rented, etc. by the owner or others.

ADVERTISING in the city: If you got one of everything being advertised, would you be healthier, wiser, sexier, happier, kinder? What illusion of the good life does this advertising illustrate? What values are supported by this illusion? Is this illusion obtainable?

RESOURCE PEOPLE AND INTERVIEWING

One of the most exciting aspects of doing city experiences has been the "discovery" and cultivation of human resources. It has yielded exciting dividends for the teachers and students involved. Experience has shown that surprisingly few people have unlisted phone numbers. What's more, most people, from high government officials to chefs in ethnic restaurants, are often delighted to break their routines for a few hours and talk with students. They just need to be asked. One recent "find" is in New York City: Jim Rooney from the Village School contacted Robert Moses, who perhaps has had more influence on the social and political institutions of US cities than any other person in recent history. The 88 year old architect and planner delightedly accepted an offer to meet with Jim's high school group. Jim initially was taking a blind shot; he never really expected a reply from Moses.

A partial list of accessible people who might have a particularly unique slant on the city would include the following:

hot line/switchboard/crises center workers
environmental and social change groups
slaughter house workers
bridge operators, toll takers
artists, dancers, performers
police community relations officers
soup kitchens/missing personnel
retired government officials
chefs
public health officials
city planners
architects
professors/urbanologists
newspaper reporters
construction workers
social service workers
hospital emergency room staff
senior citizens, especially in declining neighborhoods
community/neighborhood organizers

Getting information from these people, i.e., the process of interviewing, can be done in several ways. Traditionally, when resource people such as these have been incorporated in curriculum or school programs, the content of the conversation with students has been determined by the teacher and is presented in the classroom. It's much more interesting to conduct the interview at the home or office of the guest and to let the students totally determine the content. (I usually get so excited, though, that's hard for me not to ask questions.)

I try to spend some time preparing students for these conversations through role playing and explaining how to be an effective listener. If we're going to meet a person whose time is valuable and who is scheduling us into a particular time slot, then I help students create good questions ahead of time. I also try to teach them how to follow-up questions and when to change subjects.

Often, the most valuable resource people are strangers to us. I encourage the students to do a lot of exploration -- wandering, chatting with strangers, following their curiosity -- and the more they explore, the more they find. Also, I encourage them to look in unlikely as well

as likely places. A local coffee shop or a front lawn in a neighborhood can be places where strangers are very willing to talk. In a conversation with a stranger, the students obviously don't have written questions; they have to rely on their intuition and ability to listen. This style is a much more natural one in this situation than a formal interview with questions and answers.

The skill of being able to talk with a stranger is a valuable one in a city environment. Not only is it useful for acquiring specific pieces of information (directions, locations) but it can give students a better awareness of city life.

Any person outside of the school is a potential resource and can be included in a school program beyond a conversation during a city experience. Community Learning or Internship programs are tailor-made for those individuals in a city who are interested in sharing their skills or opinions. Briefly, an Internship program matches students with community teachers in some type of extended "on-the-job" learning experience. Nationally, these programs have been tremendously successful. For details, contact the National Commission on Resources for Youth, 36 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036. This agency has extensive files on Internship programs.

WRITTEN PROJECTS

Peter Freiberg, ace reporter for the New York Post and Dean of Neighborhood Reporters, writes four of five newspaper articles a week about New York City neighborhoods. Here is a list of news stories he anticipates writing in the near future. This does not of course include breaking news stories. Besides giving you an appreciation of the range and diversity of neighborhood issues, reading this list may trigger some ideas that you can pursue.

Brighton Beach: Piece on mostly Jewish Brighton Beach, which has an aging population and some housing and crime problems, but helped by influx of Soviet Jews.

Power Plant: A controversial proposal to build a $650 million plant in a rural section of Staten Island; a look at the proposal's pros and cons, and at the neighborhoods that would be affected.

Broadway: Problems of commercial stores on upper West Side sections of Broadway, tying it in with what is happening on other neighborhood shopping streets.

Bleecker Street: Revival of Greenwich Village street with cafes, new housing, etc; continuing problems on Eighth St., but formation of new neighborhood committee to deal with it.

7th Street: Look at Lower East Side block where artists and other people have been renovating old tenements for co-ops.

Methodist Hospital: Brooklyn hospital had been fought by community over expansion plans, but a compromise has now been worked out.

NYU Lofts: University wants to evict businesses with over 600 jobs to convert buildings into apartments; businesses and community upset, city compromise rejected by NYU.

LIABILITY

I honestly do believe that the danger of the "big city" is overstated, or at least not seen in perspective. Using the analogy of the wilderness trip, a particularly dangerous section of a city could be compared to an avalanche area. To safely cross below an avalance, one needs to know the temperature, type of snow, and degree of the slope, and have the proper equipment. Even with that knowledge, there is still danger. In a city, the information needed involves crime rates, time of day, and subtle aspects of behavior, language, etc. While that information may minimize danger, it won't eliminate it.

Virtually all school districts have statements on liability and they should be easily adaptable to urban adventures, provided there is prior approval and understanding of the program from the appropriate administrator. Most statements on liability center on the concept of negligence, which is considered to be the actions by an individual which would not have been carried out by a reasonable and prudent person. Therefore, the legal test of teacher negligence is: a) would a competant teacher forsee the hazard which caused the injury and b) could a competant teacher prevent injury or damage without destroying the educational value of the experience.

Obviously, the problem of teacher liability rests in the judicial interpretation of specific circumstances. But a teacher can approach the problem by taking reasonable precautions to make the activity as safe as possible and behaving in a reasonable manner in designing and implementing the activity. Informing parents and getting written parental permission does not constitute a waiver of responsibility. However, it is important to establish a relationship with parents, students, and supervisors so that student behavior in a situation can be predicted and parent reaction to unforseen events can be anticipated.

The key, I believe, is one's familiarity with the environment and a sense of how to handle emergencies. When I have done intensive five day programs with high school students, where we will be living in the city, we first talk out expectations of the danger. With rare exception, suburban kids are scared of the city and want to make sure they are protected. I use the following plan: whenever individuals or small groups are off on their own, I give them a definite time when we are to meet back as a large group. If anyone is over an hour late, I call the police dispatcher and my immediate supervisor to simply tell them that a person is missing. If two hours pass and I have heard nothing, then I put in a legitimate missing persons report to the dispatcher, and I contact my supervisor and the parents.

Now, up until the first hour deadline, the missing students can call me at our city "home" (generally a church) or the dispatcher or my supervisor and thereby relay a message to me. Perhaps they have missed a bus or gotten lost, but by calling in they have put aside any suspicion. Incidently, the police dispatcher helped me set this up and was very willing to participate as a message relayer if needed. In over 12 different city experiences, this entire procedure was needed only once.

Obviously, I let the students and parents know this plan beforehand, and the students must carry the appropriate telephone numbers with them. I also have the parents sign a customary liability release form and I have personal phone contact with each parent before the experience.

I have put only two types of restrictions on the movement of the students through the city. In Denver, there is only one park which is honestly considered dangerous and so the students are not allowed to enter that

area; and at night, we travel as a total group to an activity. During the day, I have found that it is important for students to travel singly or in small groups to assist them in their interaction with the city. Even so, I always know their plans and the general area where they will be.

Finally, I have experimented with a short rape prevention course on the first evening of the experience. A local crises center provided a comprehensive program for males and females in 2-3 hours. It was very successful; in fact, it almost established too much paranoia about being raped, yet it gave each participant some practical ways to avoid rape.

I feel that the above procedures, along with the teacher's familiarity with the city, should cover the needs for liability.

TEACHER WORKSHOP

Approximately one year ago, Colorado Outward Bound School ran a three day urban experience for Denver area teachers. It was modeled after a similar attempt in New York City. This spring, COBS repeated the three day workshop, with refinements, for a new group of teachers. The organizer was Maggie Fox (who got help from Reola McCleod and Joe Nold of the COBS staff). I was fortunate to be one of the staff for the weekend -- I'd like to share my impressions of the three days.

The goals, as Maggie put them, were two fold: "...to involve the participants in a series of activities that will broaden their view of the city and to give them the opportunity to see the city as a vehicle for learning." The schedule was flexible; we only had from 4 pm Friday to 3 pm Sunday to accomplish a variety of tasks. We split into groups of 5-6 members, and began to move through the city by foot and public transportation.

As a staff, we felt there were six essential tasks that each group would accomplish: an in-depth conversation or interview with a stranger, to be done as individuals or as a group; some type of service project, where each of us would give some energy back to the city or a resident of the city; creation of a recreation activitiy; an adventurous experience (perhaps just living in the city for two days could be an adventure for some participants); a quiet time to be alone in the city; and a study of a community or neighborhood. Miraculously, we fit all of these activities into the two days, and in addition, did some related, yet different actitivities: several discussions within the small group centering on expectations, goals, planning and outcomes; short observation or creativity exercises revolving around a piece of trash or a particularly interesting building (very similar to many "environmental education" activities normally reserved for the wilderness but adapted to an urban environment); a good deal of journal and reflective type writing; and several problem solving situations, such as locating a vacant apartment.

One of the fascinating aspects of being on the staff of a workshop like this was watching the styles of the other instructors. We all took a different approach to the same activities, and in general, were equally successful with our groups. I tried to be relaxed and let the group make most, if not all of the decisions involved, and only marginally made suggestions about what I thought the group should do. There were three particularly important tasks I felt were mine to do -- helping clarify expectations,

debriefing, and sharing my perceptions as an instructor. In all types of educational experiences, I feel it is important for each participant to clarify personal goals and expectations. As an instructor, it helped me provide a meaningful and relevant experience, "customizing" the experience for all involved. Debriefing, for me, is a continuous process, through which individuals reflect on the learning that has taken place for them. It's important for group members to share their learning. And finally, it was essential that I share my style and approach as an instructor. Since I was working with teachers who were seeking to expand their skills and develop programs for their particular students, I felt that we needed to focus on the role of the leader.

In designing the content of the weekend, the staff considered the relative importance of experience and process skills. While we felt that the participants should ave an adventurous type of weekend, with a variety of experiences applicable to their work, we decided to focus on the process skills which are fundamental to learning about the city. Joe Nold was instrumental in extracting the following list of process skills from the activities of the weekend.

1. Urban orienteering -- how to find your way around the city, using maps, and traveling by foot or bus
2. Interviewing or conversation skills -- the ability to reach out, listen, and get information from strangers
3. Observation skills -- awareness of physical and social spaces
4. Group forming and group sharing skills
5. Goal setting and expectations sharing skills -- including goals and expectations of the individual, group, program or institution
6. Awareness of decision making process -- both structured and non-structured
7. Program planning skills -- "What will we do tomorrow?" - self-direction
8. Develop consciousness of the learning process -- not just "What did I learn?" but "How did I learn and how did it change me?"
9. Develop atttitude of "thinking about the experience," reflecting on the experience
10. Problem solving skills -- how to identify the problem, where and how to find solutions
11. Inquiry skills -- asking for information, finding human resources, using the phone book
12. Re-energizing skills -- finding private, personal space in a crowded city
13. Develop atttitude of curiosity and openness to new options, and developing new ways of teaching using the city
14. "Drying out" skills -- emphasis on thinking, writing, synthesizing experiences to turn them into learning
15. Being able to define a city and community

I learned more from Joe's conceptualization of these processes than any other aspect of the weekend. For me, it crystallized the goals that I've been working towards in the design of the city experiences for high school students. And I realized that each of these process skills can be incorporated into a relatively short experience. In the three days of this workshop, we were able to concretely touch each of the skills.